

The changes to Speech and Debate Rules for 2026 continue our effort to simplify and clarify the rules, with consideration of how we navigate those rules on the website.

We invite our affiliates to write the committees if any rules seem unclear (SpeechCommittee@NCFCA.org; DebateCommittee@NCFCA.org).

Speech Rule and Ballot Changes*

All events	Relocated items to better fitting places (e.g. league policies, tech guide)
All events	Took out judge table and center stage boundaries
All events	Added tag lines to rules
All events	Took out the definition of terms where possible and linked the term to a separate definitions list
All events	Added the prohibition of competitors using electronic devices to prepare, research, or request, send, or receive information during the round.
All events	Minor clarification in wording or arrangement (Notably in interpretation cutting and music rules)
All interpretation events	Took away restrictions on what tunes may be used but added a requirement to state the source for any tune in the introduction
All interpretation and platform events	Took out the description of what can be changed for championship tournaments
Digital Presentation	Took out the description in the rules regarding equipment setup in DP. Clarified sharing devices. Added a minimum of 8GB of RAM for devices used for online competition.
Impromptu and Apol	Clarifying the option of ending prep time with either the audible alarm or stopping the timer and showing the judges the time left
Impromptu	Took out the description in the rules of what may be taken to the prep table.
Ballots	Disconnected scores from ranks. Judges can view all ballots at once. 5th category added. Events are customized.

Debate Rule and Ballot Changes*

All events	Relocated items to better fitting places (e.g. league policies, tech guide)
All events	Added tag lines to rules
All events	Took out the definition of terms that are not in the rules (e.g. tag lines, case), and linked terms in the rules to a separate definitions list
All events	Took out the rules regarding online competitors' use of the frame and partners' sharing of their devices and cameras
All events	Minor clarifications in wording or arrangement (notably in the evidence and citation rules)
All events	Added definitions for "evidence distortion," "evidence fabrication," "presented in the round"
All events	Added "at first opportunity" to clarify when to share requested evidence
Ballots	Disconnected scores from ranks. Moved "Reason for Decision" to the top and other minor arrangement changes. Removed "Double Loss" option.

*The summary charts are summaries and not exhaustive. They do not replace a careful reading of the rules for each event.